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RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 0903
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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - ASEAN SUMMIT

¶1. LEAD STORIES: Most Monday morning papers led with reports on the DPJ victories in Sunday's Upper House bi-elections in Kanagawa and Shizuoka Prefectures.

¶2. "Let's Cultivate Community Together" On the recent ASEAN summit in Thailand, the liberal Asahi editorialized (10/26): "ASEAN takes pride in the fact that it is the center of regional cooperation in East Asia. Concerns have emerged [within ASEAN] that the focal point of discussions on regional integration may shift to the northern parts of East Asia following the launch of trilateral summit meetings involving Japan, China, and South Korea last year. ASEAN is also perplexed about the rivalry between Japan and China over who should lead regional cooperation, as well as about [a new regional group's] distance from the United States. Prime Minister Hatoyama [in explaining his East Asian Community initiative] displayed his approach of deepening intra-regional dialogue, including with countries that have different values, in cooperation with ASEAN, while calling for U.S. engagement. We hope his policy will lead to the elimination of concerns held by ASEAN."

¶3. "East Asian Community without U.S. Inconceivable" The business-oriented Nikkei argued in an editorial (10/26): "It was a matter of course for Prime Minister Hatoyama to underscore the necessity of U.S. involvement in an East Asian Community. Coordination with the U.S. is indispensable for Japan to move forward with the initiative.... The Obama administration has adopted a policy of attaching importance to Southeast Asia. In July it signed the Treaty of Amity, which is ASEAN's basic convention. The first-ever summit between the U.S. and ASEAN will be held in Singapore in November, with President Obama planning to participate. The principles of the East Asian Community should be ones that help accelerate democratization and policy transparency in East Asia. Such a community that does not include the U.S. is inconceivable. We suppose that many countries in Asia also subscribe to this view."

¶4. "Open Regionalism Should Be Promoted" The top-circulation,

moderate Yomiuri insisted (10/26): "It can be said that Prime Minister Hatoyama made clear his position of not excluding the U.S. [from his East Asian Community initiative]. He stated during the tripartite summit among Japan, China, and South Korea on October 10 that Japan has relied on the U.S. too much. This comment generated the suspicion at home and abroad that his administration is shifting its diplomatic focus from the U.S. to Asia. The prime minister's statements [during the ASEAN summit] were aimed at promptly addressing such concerns and easing the U.S.'s irritation with the DPJ administration. The prime minister is advised to bear in mind that U.S.-Japan coordination is a cornerstone when making remarks."

15. "Open Regionalism Should Be Promoted" The top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri contended (10/26): "U.S. involvement is essential in order to counter the growing influence of China in the economic and military arenas in East Asia. Japanese diplomacy must be conducted with this reality in mind. Neither ASEAN nor any individual nation will subscribe to the Hatoyama initiative in the absence of solid diplomatic principles."

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